

## **Parenting Quality as the Predictor of Mental Health in Adulthood: A Qualitative Approach**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This qualitative research highlights the deep influence that the quality of parenting can have on adults' mental health. The research reveals interesting and complex discussion stemming from qualitative interviews with participants and includes aspects of parental relationships that might have complexity and lasting impacts on an adult's mental health. Key findings demonstrate the importance of parental warmth, acts of support, and emotional validation in the mental health of adults. In comparison, experiences of being neglected, criticized, or unavailability were related to increased vulnerability to mental health challenges. This study reaffirms the role of nurturing parental approaches in facilitating healthy mental health in adult years. The implications of this study for parenting interventions, mental health support, and prevention strategies in reducing the intergenerational transmission of mental health problems are also significant.*

**Keywords:** Parenting Quality, Mental Health, Adulthood.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parents occupy a major role in the molding and shaping of the lives individuals occur from infancy into adulthood. They have unique sets of beliefs, characteristics, values, attitudes, and behaviors with these sets of uniqueness varying from parent to parent (Boediman&Desnawati, 2019). These attitudes or behaviors work separately or collectively to influence child outcomes and create an emotional bond in which the parent's behavior is expressed (Eisenberg et al., 2015). At an early age, the child is completely dependent on their parents for their basic needs which include the need for love, warmth, fulfillment of emotional needs, belongingness, a supporting and nurturing environment, food, and safety. A child spends most of his time with his parent, so his personality development at this age depends on the nature and quality of interactions with his parents as he/she internalizes their values, belief, and attitudes. It depends on parent's practices how their child would turn out in the future (Breiner et al., 2016).

Parenting practices have a significant impact on psychological health issues. They can range from loving and supportive to abusive or careless. The quality of parenting stands out among all the factors that influence an individual's mental health because it has a substantial and enduring effect on mental health throughout a person's life. These parenting practices have been known as the important elements for the

global positive self-image and well-being of adults. (Anwer et al., 2019). Baumrind has integrated the idea that certain parenting practices use specific types of self-control, and sustain a definite character; afterward, it is critical to get it in the occurrence that particular child-rearing styles influence attachment and the parent-child relationship (Muraco et al., 2020). Parenting not only affects self-viability, self-esteem, self-improvement, and academic inspiration but also has a great influence on the mental health of individuals (Brown & Iyengar, 2008). The quality of this bond affects the children's behavioral, social, and emotional growth which remains constant throughout different life situations (Brook, 2008). Throughout the development from childhood to adulthood, parents play a significant role in the regulation of a child's emotions and quality of behaviors that impact their overall well-being. (Grudman, 2010).

Parenting styles are defined as the actions and methods parents use to supervise and interact with their children (Nargis et al., 2018). Parenting styles were categorized by Baumrind (1971) as permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. A climate of trust, cooperation, open communication, psychological autonomy, and self-reliance is fostered by authoritative parents (Ballantine et al., 2001). Parents that adopt an authoritarian parenting style are harsh, demanding, and less receptive. They also require obedience. The goal of permissive parenting is to provide children a great degree of warmth while imposing minimal control on them. Children are typically granted a great deal of freedom to make their own decisions in life, and punishment is rarely applied in a lenient manner.

According to a comprehensive analysis of the literature on parenting style, which included 59 publications from 2010 to 2019, parental warmth, behavioral control, and autonomy grant are associated with a lower incidence of internalized mental health issues in teenagers (Gorostiaga et al 2019). These results hold for both young children and adolescents, as Sternberg's (2001) study of the literature illustrates and it shows that adolescents with authoritative parents- those who show emotional warmth toward their kids while enforcing rules and adopting a discipline-oriented parenting style-report lower levels of anxiety and depression and obtain higher on tests of self-reliance and self-esteem.

Spruit et al., 2020, suggested that the association between insecure attachment and depression in children and adolescents was shown to be significant ( $d = 0.31$ ) in a meta-analysis encompassing 123 studies. According to another study, emotional warmth and support, together with parental participation in daily activities, are aspects of good parenting and behaviors that can enhance children's mental health (Tramonte et al., 2015; Khattak et al. (2021); Spera, 2005).

Adolescents who perceive their parents as authoritative tend to have fewer intense-or contentious-discussions on norms and boundaries than adolescents whose parents are perceived as permissive or authoritarian. Furthermore, previous research has indicated that the authoritative parenting style can help adolescents develop their self-regulation abilities and ego resilience by encouraging them to display "flexible, adaptable behaviors" when they recover from stressful situations. This is because authoritative parenting fosters a more predictable environment, provides warmth and protection from potential harm, and helps adolescents develop their self-regulatory skills (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Khattak et al.2021)). Similarly, Rothwell and Devoid (2023) found out that, adults who have authoritative parents who can enforce laws have much better mental health outcomes ( $d = 0.31$ ). The majority of the parenting impact on mental health is mediated by the quality of the connection as assessed by both the parent and the child, but this effect is negligible in comparison to the relationship's overall quality ( $d = .50$  or  $.57$ ).

The impact of parental effects on mental health has received significant research in the fields of psychology, sociology, and public health. Numerous studies (Anwer et al., 2019; Tramonte et al., 2015; Tavassolie et al., 2016) have demonstrated the importance of early childhood experiences, particularly parental interactions, in shaping emotional regulation, interpersonal connections, and cognitive functioning. Theoretical approaches range from attachment theory to ecological systems frameworks, illuminating the various routes via which parenting practices intersect with mental health outcomes across

the lifetime. Research (Esienberg et al., 2005; Pearson 2013) into the impact of parenting on mental health frequently takes diverse paths, investigating both the protective effects of positive parenting practices and the negative consequences of poor childhood experiences. While considerable evidence supports the role of caring, responsive parenting in developing resilience and psychological well-being, numerous research (Elizabeth et al., 2015; Nargis et al., 2018) has also identified the negative consequences of maltreatment, neglect, or dysfunctional family dynamics on mental health trajectories. However, there is a significant gap in the landscape of existing research, a lack of sophisticated qualitative investigations that explore the subjective experiences, perspectives, of individuals navigating the consequences of different parenting ideologies. To better understand the complicated relationship between adult mental health outcomes and parenting quality, the present research explores the experiences, views, and narratives of individuals who have grown up with a variety of parenting styles. Therefore, this research aims to explore the impact of quality of parenting that is significant contributor of mental health outcomes in adults.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Questions**

1. How do adults perceived the quality of parenting they received during upbringing considering dimensions, emotional responsiveness, support, guidance and consistency?
2. What are the perceived effects of parental warmth and support on adult mental health and well-being?
3. What role do parents communication styles play in shaping adults mental health and coping mechanism?

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the impact of quality of parenting on mental health of adults.
2. To describe the effects of perceived parental warmth and support on adult's mental health.
3. To find out the role of parental communication styles in shaping the adults well-being and coping mechanism.

### **Research Design**

The qualitative research design used phenomenological approach to explore the parenting quality impact on adult's mental health through subjective experiences by conducting in-depth interviews, using purposive convenient sampling.

### **Sample**

Participants ( $N=4$ ) with an age range of 18 and above years old was recruited by using convenient sampling technique.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

- Adults aged 18 and above
- Participants willing to share the experiences of parenting during upbringing and its impact on their mental health.
- Individuals that effectively articulate their thoughts and experiences.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Individuals under 18 age

- Participant that are unwilling to share and discuss parenting experiences.
- Individuals with severe mental health conditions that make them unable to engage in research process effectively.

### **Procedure**

Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews to gather the detailed account of participant experiences regarding parenting quality and its impact on mental well-being. The interview guidelines (Braun & Clarke) were prepared that entails the questions related to the participant's perception of parental warmth, support, emotional responsiveness during their upbringing and its subsequent effect on their well-being. Interviews were audio recorded with participant consent and later transcribed verbatim were used for analysis.

### **Ethical Guidelines**

Ethical approval was taken prior conducting the research. All ethical considerations were taken while approaching participants. They were brief about the aims and purpose of the study. They were told about the voluntary participation, measuring of confidentiality and anonymity. Participant had autonomy to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

### **RESULTS**

The results described 5 broad categories that significantly impact the mental health of adults during the quality of parenting they experienced from childhood to adulthood. These includes emotional responsiveness, warmth and affection, consistency and boundaries, parental support and nurturing, communication and listening.

#### **Table 1**

*Themes, Sub-Themes, and Verbatim Obtained from Interviews.*

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Verbatims
Emotional Responsiveness	emotional support and understanding	<i>mujhyek support chahiyethiapne parents kitrf se. unho ne merasaathdia or ja kesaari situation ko ache se handle kia or btaya k kesihu me or kiskigltihytkhy.whomera emotions kosamajatahaaurbohatachasaunhonamujhe response dia"</i>
Warmth and Affection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental involvement and care</li> <li>Expressing love and happiness</li> </ul>	<p><i>Bhut caring thy mere father Ney ghermeinZaidawaqtNahiguzaraunki job kimoiyet hi asithilekinmeri mother kafi responsible thi. Hmari diet KahmarephenyornyKahrcheezkahmariunhoonneybhutkhayalrkha."</i></p> <p><i>"JeeBilkuljb b mera result ata or acha result atameri mother ghermein treat rkhtithijismeinmerifavourite dish bantithi or meinapni cousins sub hi ko invite kertithi or aik mill ker celebration hotithiyehmujhebhutKhushihotithi."</i></p>
Consistency and Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting boundaries</li> <li>Parental consistency</li> </ul>	<p><i>"mujhe us time meinbhutsihadoodasilagijisney us waqtmein mere ander be-chaini or bhut se mtlbehsas-kamtrikashikaar b Kia"</i></p> <p><i>"valdeinkimustaqilmizagineymujhe is maqaamtklaya k mujheapnyjazbatkinishadahimeinbhutmadadmiltihai"</i></p>
Parental support and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support during stress</li> <li>Motivational guidance</li> <li>Support in pursuing interest</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Nahi, Alhamdulilah mere parents kafi supportive rahyhain or jb b meinyunseKuch b share Kia haitu wo koi bary se bara problem thayh Kisi b tarahkibaatthituunhoon Ney bhut achy se uskosunaunhoonneysamja or us k mutabiqmujhe guide b Kia."</i></p> <p><i>"Jbjb hum apnymaqasidmein de-motivate honylagtyhmari efforts km honylagtitu wo hmeinmaremaqasidyaaddilaty thy k apneytuasatuhotakernahai or asawesabannahaituyhyahantk is stage tkphonchnymein mere liakafi helpful raha."</i></p> <p><i>"mujhe writing KernyKalikhnyKabhutshoqthamujhe Painting Ka or mere valdein Ney MerashoqPurakernymeinmerimadadki"</i></p>

Communication and Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of communication</li> </ul>	<p><i>"Jin logon k sathaprehty ho unki communication skills bhutzaida matter kertihain agar jbt k wo achy teriqy se apse baatnahikereingyapnibaatapkosamjeingyNahituapunkokesesamjeingy... KabhizehnidabaoKayhunkitaraf se bhutzaida tension yeh pressure kasamnanahikernaperha."</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of attention</li> </ul>	<p><i>jb me waqai me koi serious baatkroo to wo seriously lete, but I got a question, its been k wo suntehy k nhitwsuntehai, blklblkl importance detehyofcourse."</i></p>

Table 1 showed the themes and sub-themes that were obtained from interviews. Thematic analysis found that their influence as parents extended across multiple domains. One important aspect that participants focused on in their stories was the emotional help, understanding, and empathy offered by parents. Parents offered warmth and affection through caring, involvement, and positive celebration that strengthened their bonds and positive memories. The steadiness and limits exercised by parents, while having a “dual role,” could sometimes develop restlessness and a feeling of inferiority, time and firmness limits notwithstanding, the parent behavioral rest or consistency towards emotional parenting seemed to be a positive influence. That is, support and guidance by parents appeared to act as a level of ‘protection’, providing motivation, encouraging problem solving, and participation in satisfying sub activities. Finally, participants stressed and reflected on the importance of good communication and listening skills in fostering understanding and alleviating psychological problems. Altogether, these themes indicate that participants saw parents as the main providers of emotional support and also the key to their growth in self-confidence and resilience.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed is to explore the role of parenting on mental health of adults. For this in depth were taken from participants. The results of the interviews revealed five main theme that includes emotional responsiveness, warmth and affection, consistency and boundaries, parental support and nurturing, communication and listening that significantly impact the mental health of adults during the quality of parenting they experienced from childhood to adulthood. These findings aligned with the previous researches highlighting the complex factor to contributing to mental health of adults (Newton et al., 2014; Hirata&Kamakura; 2017)

Emotional responsiveness in parenting refers to a caregiver's capacity to identify, understand, and respond effectively to their child's emotional needs and cues and emotional support from parents as the feelings of compassion, friendliness, care, attention, love, and confidence that others show to the individual, as well as his sense of comfort and belonging while dealing with the. The finding of this study demonstrated that the parental emotional support and understanding leads towards positive development and had positive impact on adult mental health that are consistent with previous literature (Sarafino, 2014; Rehman et al. 2021; Davidov&Grusec, 2006).

Additionally, parental warmth and affection, as associated with parental adaptability which is a particularly important aspect of parenting for understanding adaptive adaptation across adulthood, described positive associations with adolescents' adjustment across different cultures. Previous research (Khaleque and Rhoner, 2002; Alcaide et al., 2023) has also supported the magnitude connected to

parental warmth and affection. had significant impact on overall personality development of an individual.

Another aspects of quality of parenting includes parenting that are consistent and have set boundaries for their children's so they have adequate development. Previous research (Chan et al.,2011) suggested that strong discipline and expectations set limits and boundaries, allowing youngsters to not only predict how their parents will respond but also learn how to behave. Consistency permits boundaries and standards to be established, providing youngsters with feeling of safety. The results of the study are consistent with existing literature that healthy boundaries lead towards healthy development.

Apart from boundaries parent's guidance and their support had positive impact on children as they will allow open communication from both sides that create healthy environment where youngster is fully able to express their emotions and worries. Without passing judgment and attentively listen to child's emotions while providing comfort and support. This will encourage the child to adopt healthy habits by helping them to learn effective coping mechanisms and stress- reduction techniques. Previous research (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2012) have discovered that not only direct but indirect involvement of parental support and guidance play a crucial role in children development, help them to fight life challenges and built a strong foundation for future success by providing support in pursuing interest.

Adolescent emotional consequences may be mitigated by a positive relationship with parents. Parents and children quality communication is seen to be a sign of how well their relationship is going (Weinstein et al., 2022). Studies have generally indicated that improved parent-adolescent communication helps teenagers adjust to challenging life events, and that deeper family ties are associated with improved communication (Tanvir et al., 2016). The findings of the study revealed that communication and listening are essential for supporting children's mental health.

### **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The first limitation of this study is that small sample size is taken. Future studies should take larger sample size. Secondly, the interviews were taken only from adults so future researches should focus on conducting interviews from parents as well. Another limitation of this study was that in-depth interviews were conducted future should use another method to collect data.

### **CONCLUSION**

The type of parenting children receive directly and inextricably influences their adult mental health. Warm, calm, and consistently supportive parents typically promote self-esteem, emotional resiliency, and healthy coping skills that positively affect psychological well-being in adulthood. Conversely, children of emotionally detached, overly controlling, or neglectful parents experience greater incidence of mental health challenges in adulthood, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and relationship challenges. Although adult mental health is influenced by life experiences, peer pressure, and genetic predisposition, early parental care is an essential factor. Realizing the importance of this relationship underscores how important it is to promote early intervention and positive parenting strategies as critical pathways to mental health promotion throughout life span.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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### **Authors Contribution**

Conceptualization: AA

Methodology: AA, MK

Data Collection: BS

Writing-Review and Editing: AA, MK

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